

Overcooked pasta and beans ? Still nutritious? ^[1]

Dear Alice,

I know if I cook vegetables too long, they would lose nutrients. How about pasta and beans? Do they lose their carbohydrates and proteins and other nutrients in them if I cook too long? I always cook pasta and beans for over an hour because I like nice and soft and plumed pastas and beans. Am I eating zero nutritious pasta and beans?

Long Cooker

Answer

Dear Long Cooker,

Whether you're an avid chef or a microwave maven, it's good to know that overcooking can deplete the amount of vitamins and minerals in foods. If you're cooking your pasta and beans for as long as you say, it's possible that you're losing some of their nutritional value.

Overcooking destroys bonds between molecules, significantly depleting the nutrients. For example, overcooking can destroy amino acids and many of the B vitamins, such as vitamins B1 and B5. These vitamins are key component for metabolism and energy production.

Generally, shorter cooking time retains more nutrition in a food. Here are a few basic cooking guidelines for your pasta and beans:

Beans, peas, and lentils (members of the legume family) are low in fat and high in fiber, making them a healthy part of your diet. Cooking your beans properly can make them a nutritious and delicious addition to a meal. Dried beans should be soaked overnight in fresh water. They are then cooked for one to three hours, depending on the variety of bean. This is standard preparation, and beans cooked in this manner are full of nutrients.

Pasta is a complex carbohydrate, with more fiber and a lower glycemic index than simple sugars. Overcooking pasta can strip it of its fiber content. Most pasta only needs to be boiled between 5 and 15 minutes, depending on the cut of the noodle. Overcooking pasta will only add to the loss of vitamins (especially water-soluble B vitamins) and minerals that occurs when you cook it. Another tip: try not to rinse cooked grains and pasta, as this causes further loss of nutrients.

The style of cooking plays an critical role in the overall nutrition of food as well. Whether fresh, steamed, baked, grilled, boiled, or fried, the manner in which food is prepared can modify the

nutritional content. For instance, boiling leeches more nutrients out of vegetables and beans than baking, as many of the vitamins in vegetables are water-soluble. Steaming and microwaving your food [2] can help maintain the most nutrients.

Bon appétit!

Alice!

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